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# GEOGRAPHY IN ITS RELATION TO HISTORY.

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## A LECTURE

DELIVERED AT THE BIRKBECK INSTITUTION

BY

WILLIAM HUGHES, F.R.G.S.


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## GEOGRAPHY IN ITS RELATION TO HISTORY.

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I WILL not affirm that the relationship which geography bears to the records of human action in past ages offers the most attractive of the many aspects under which the subject may be regarded, though it would not be difficult, I think, to make out a strong case in support of such an assertion. Nor am I by any means sure that the historical relationships of geography are those that find most favour with professed cultivators of geographical science in the present day. There is a tendency, in some quarters, to speak of physical geography as the only geography worthy to be ranked as a science, and to regard other branches of the study as of inferior value, and as consequently entitled to little esteem. I hold this tendency to be founded upon an erroneous conception of what geography really is, and to involve an imperfect estimate of the place which physical geography occupies (or rather should occupy) in the general scheme of geographical study. The truth is, that *all* geography, if it be worth the name, is physical, or natural; that is to say, is based upon a correct description of the earth's natural features and aspects, climates, and productions. Physical geography is neither a new subject nor a separate subject, although the vastly increased and still increasing body of facts bearing upon the natural aspects and phenomena of the globe, which have been accumulated within modern times, have formed the material from which extended generalizations, unknown to former ages, have been derived, and the relationships between geography and other branches of natural science more clearly established.

Physical geography is undoubtedly deserving of all the time and attention that can be bestowed upon it by the student, and the more fully physical geography is understood, and its diversified array of facts and phenomena laid

up in the storehouse of the mind, the more clearly will the relationship of geography to history be appreciated. The physical aspects and attributes of the earth's surface have in all ages largely influenced, and as long as the world lasts must continue to influence, the habits, industries, and desires of mankind, and a knowledge of those aspects and attributes is indispensable to a due comprehension of the motives by which actions often pregnant with momentous consequences to man have been prompted. The persevering endeavour to effect a readier means of intercourse, with a view to commercial issues, between the shores of South-eastern Asia and those of Western Europe, led to the discovery of the New World and the circumnavigation of the globe; as renewed efforts, directed to the same object, have in the present day resulted in the severance of two continents and junction of two seas, by the canal which now crosses the isthmus of Suez. The particular topics, too, of which physical geography (even in its most elementary chapters) treats, are in themselves so varied and attractive, so abundantly endowed with scenic charm, so suggestive in their very nature, that it is no matter of surprise to find the subject one of growing interest in the schools and colleges of the present day, at least in those of them which have the courage to admit the claims of natural science to a prominent place in such a scheme of education as is fitted to the wants of the present day.

And yet there are, I well know, persons whose conception of geography is of a kind which leads them to think and speak of it as an unattractive, a "dry" subject. It may be useful, even in a certain degree necessary, they will allow; and so is Johnson's dictionary, or the multiplication table. But beyond this they are hardly prepared to carry their estimate of geography. Is this estimate a just one? Are the aspects of the natural world unattractive? Are mountains devoid of interest as subjects of inquiring regard? Does the ocean offer an unattractive subject of contemplation? Is the desert an unsuggestive theme? The river, or the lake, an uninviting text of discourse?

I am confident that you would answer these inquiries in the negative. But it may, nevertheless, not be out of place

to glance at some of the topics which they suggest. The *mountain*, the *desert*, the *river*, the *ocean*—these, and the phenomena belonging to them, are the very texts of physical geography. How rich—almost infinitely rich—in the case of each, the theme! How susceptible of such illustration as will call into exercise not merely the reasoning faculties, in a strictly logical sense, but the harmonies of feeling, the play of fancy, the magic skill of an artist's pencil, the delicate susceptibilities of a poet's thought!

Mountains, together with the highland masses of which they are a portion, form the most prominent and conspicuous features that belong to the surface of our planet; and in their structure and stratification, not less than in the general grouping and arrangement of their masses, offer enduring evidence of those upheaving forces by the agency of which, in past geological periods, the respective contour of land and sea has been determined. Their various altitudes, direction, and slope, regulate in great measure the course, development, and respective velocities of the rivers which originate on their opposite sides, and carry the elements of fertility to the plains below. The valleys which they enclose are amongst the fairest and most attractive scenes of nature. Their higher portions, within the more elevated mountain-lands, exhibit a covering of everlasting snow, and give origin to those vast glaciers or ice-streams which are the unfailing feeders of Alpine rivers. The passes by which the mountain region is traversed are the highways of communication, whether for purposes of peaceful commercial intercourse, or of war, between rival nations, and their difficulties of transit, or facilities for defence, have often determined the fate of armies and influenced the destinies of nations. Their influence on climate is great, indeed hardly capable of exaggeration, as the recognition in the present day of the various hill-stations of our Indian territories as sanitariums abundantly testifies. All the climates of the earth, from the heat of the tropics to the intense cold of polar lands, are to be found within the range of a few thousand feet, in vertical direction, upon the southern slopes of the Himalaya mountains. And zones of vegetable and animal life succeed



one another, in like manner, in the passage from the mountain's base to the mountain top. Surely the study of such conditions and phenomena as these, even in the merely elementary stage which treats of the distribution of high lands and low lands over the face of the globe, is worthy of intelligent and inquiring regard.

The ocean, in its immensity of extent, its ever recurring and perpetual changes, its mysterious depths (no longer, except in the language of poetry, unfathomable), its silent and onward-flowing currents—those rivers of the sea which are the noiseless but potent agents of interchange between opposite coasts, bearing into distant latitudes in one case the warmth of intra-tropical lands, in another the low temperatures and floating icebergs of regions proximate to the poles—the perennial or seasonal winds that blow over its surface, the storms that agitate its waters, are not those to be numbered amongst things worthy to be studied, and calculated to repay the utmost efforts of diligence on the part of the student? The physical geography of the sea—to use a term which has classic acceptance in the geographical literature of recent date—is indeed the necessary complement to the physical geography of the land, and neither can be profitably studied (still less adequately appreciated) without reference to its companion. In this, as in so many other conditions of the natural world, we have living evidence of those mute sympathies and harmonies which ally together the various kingdoms of nature, animate and inanimate alike. The shore line marks the common limit of the land and the water, the aspect of the mountain is reflected on the surface of the ocean, lake, or river which lies below, and the breeze which carries health or pestilence upon its wings plays over the face of both. The sea has long since become the highway of nations, and the agency of the telegraphic wire—only capable of successful submergence when the labours of the marine surveyor have sounded its depths, and ascertained the conformation of its bed—is making it also the high road of thought.

And this great, magnificent, everlasting ocean, this ever-moving wilderness of water, the same from age to age, on whose azure brow, as the poet-philosopher tells us, "time

writes no wrinkles;" this eternal sea, how suggestive in other regards of thought and emotion, of feeling and fancy! An eloquent passage in the writings of De Quincey draws a comparison between the wilderness of the barren waters and the wilderness of the barren sands; between the desert expanse of unbroken sea and the vast wastes of land which form the so-called "deserts" of the African and Asiatic continents. They exhibit the two mighty forms of perfect solitude. "Both are the parents of inevitable superstitions—of terrors, solemn, ineradicable, eternal. Sailors and the children of the desert are alike overrun with spiritual hauntings, from accidents of peril essentially connected with those modes of life, and from the eternal spectacle of the infinite. Voices seem to blend with the ravings of the sea, which will for ever impress the feeling of beings more than human; and every chamber of the great wilderness which, with little interruption, stretches from the Euphrates to the western shores of Africa, has its own peculiar terrors, both as to sights and sounds." Our great epic poet, again, makes reference to the—

—"calling shapes, and beck'ning shadows dire,  
And aery tongues that syllable men's names,  
On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses."

This is the language of poetry, but (as is the case with all real poetry) it has the truths of nature—in the present instance, the truths of physical geography—as its basis.

And what is there in the river that should enlist the attention of the student, and that, in the hands of the judicious teacher, might supply the almost exhaustless theme for lessons of striking and varied interest? Or, rather, what is there not? The river is the connecting link between the mountain and the sea, the silent guide which in the infancy of nations has pointed the way to man's advancing footsteps. The cities which have been erected on the river's bank, and the localities of which have in numerous cases owed their determination to the advantages offered by a navigable stream, exhibit the completest monuments of man's skill and industry, the records (full and enduring as architectural skill can make them) of his commercial successes, the triumphs of his civilization.

In the science of physical geography, the river is not merely the stream flowing through the land, fertilizing as it goes, and collecting tributary waters on its way, until its basin of drainage becomes the equivalent measure of a natural region, but it fills an important part in the great cycle of unceasing change which the world of nature offers to our contemplation and regard. The processes of evaporation and condensation—by which the surface waters of the earth are in ceaseless conversion into vapour, to be afterwards restored (purged of their grosser contents) to an aqueous form—the rain-cloud, the monsoon, the torrents precipitated on the high grounds with which the moist air, charged to the point of saturation, first comes into contact; the subterranean reservoirs which these torrents feed; the springs that well out from the hill-side; the brook that, chattering as it goes on its way “to join the brimming river”—these are so many parts of a vast whole, a circle of continuous and ever-living change. “Men may come, and men may go,” but the brook “goes on for ever,” and the river, like the ocean, is a type of the eternal.

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It is, however, of geography in its relations to history that I propose more particularly to speak, and in doing so I only seek to enforce principles that are already generally—indeed uniformly—admitted, and to add a few illustrations of their value, derived from such considerations as have suggested themselves to my own mind. The connection between history and geography is, indeed, sufficiently obvious. All events derive more or less of their colouring—often much of their very form and essence—from surrounding circumstances. You cannot understand the occurrences that belong to past ages, or those that are in course of present transaction, without reference to the scenes by which the actors are themselves surrounded. The conditions of time and place must be taken into account in every narrative, and every page of history bears evidence of the large extent to which the great actors in the drama of public life have been guided (often controlled) by the circumstances of surrounding locality; in other words, by

considerations which are involved in the geography, or topography, of a particular region. This is true not merely of those great external events, such as battles, by which the fate of a nation is decided, or treaties, by which the future limits of states are determined; but also of many amongst the subtler calculations and reflections which belong to (if they do not constitute) the soul of history, of those prior considerations which herald the course of external action. The statesman and the warrior are alike students of geography, or, in the absence of such study, find their schemes miscarry, from neglect of some essential element in the problem at issue, depending upon circumstances of physical contour, climate, or allied conditions. And the conditions of nature, even as regards mere external contour, in different regions, are so infinitely varied as to impart endless diversity to the forms of action by which the outer world manifests its influence upon the course of events. The vigour and active life of one nation are recognized upon the great waters, and the shores of a land enclosed sea become identified with its progress; the records of another are found in connection with the sands and barren rocks of an inland desert; of a third, in association with the course and periodical inundations of a river; of a fourth, in alliance with Scythian wastes, Alpine snows, or Hercynian forests. The mountain land, the plain, the wilderness, the sea-girt island, each has suggested, and each still suggests, to the dwellers thereon the forms of advancing civilization, the methods of attack and defence, and each has imbued the minds of those dwellers with thoughts and images derived from the aspects of surrounding nature. The superstitions, the poetry, the forms of art, even the embodied hopes and aspirations of religious emotion, take in great measure their form and colour from such conditions. Was not the mythology of Scandinavia, not less than the modes of life which the old vikings of the north were accustomed to follow, a reflex of the images presented by their native land, of the sea-girt and stormy coasts, the hollow caverns within whose recesses the waters are ever sounding, the fiords overhung by steep and dark mountain side, the snow-covered plain above, the deep glen, and the still lake which it embosoms?

And do not like considerations apply, in their earlier stages of national life, to the people of every land—to the South Sea islander, the dweller in the forest or the prairie, the pathless steppe, or the forbidding wilderness of sand and rock? Let it not be supposed that such influences, however thoroughly their agency in past times may be recognized, are in the present day bygone, or have no concern with the active life of the nineteenth century. On the contrary, the influences of natural scenery, natural phenomena, and natural productions—that is, of those conditions which are the very basis of geography in its higher significance, of all geography that is really worthy the name—these influences, I say, have become embodied in the national life, and enter (more or less consciously to ourselves) into our daily habits, occupations, modes of familiar thought, and accustomed imagery.

I might instance, were time at my disposal, an eloquent illustration of these truths from the pages of a writer whose name commands the profound respect due to lifelong service of a great worker in the cause of popular education, and of man's advancement in general. I refer to Harriet Martineau, and to her volume entitled "*Morals and Manners.*"

"Geologists tell us that they can answer for the modes of life of the people of any extensive district by looking at the geological map of the region. Put a geological map of England before one who understands it, and he will tell you that the inhabitants of the western parts, from Cornwall, through Wales, and up through Cumberland into Scotland, are miners and mountaineers; here living in clusters round the shaft of a mine, and there sprinkled over the hills and secluded in the valleys. He will tell you that on the middle portion of the surface, from Devonshire up through Leicestershire to the Yorkshire coast, the wide pastures are covered with flocks, while the people are collected into large manufacturing towns; an ordinary map showing at the same time that Kidderminster, Birmingham, Coventry, Leicester, and Nottingham, Sheffield, Huddersfield, and Leeds, lie in this district. He will tell you that the third range, comprehending the eastern part of the island, is studded with farms, and that tillage is the great occupation and interest of the inhabitants.

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"It appears as if a geological map might be a useful guide to the researches of the moralist—an idea which would have appeared insanely ridiculous half a century ago, but now reasonable enough. If the traveller be no geologist, so that he cannot by his own observation deter-

mine the nature of the soil, and thence infer for his general guidance the employments and mental and moral state of the people, he must observe the face of the country along the road he travels. He will do better still by mounting any eminences which may be within reach, whether they be churches, pillars, pyramids, pagodas, baronial castles on rocks, or peaks of mountains; thence he should look abroad, from point to point, through the whole kingdom, and mark out what he sees spread beneath him. Are there pastures extended to the horizon, with herdsmen and flocks sprinkled over them, and in the midst a cloud of smoke overhanging a town, from which roads part off in many directions? Or is it a scene of shadowy mountains, with streams leaping from their fissures, and no signs of human habitation but the machinery of a mine, with rows of dwellings near heaps of piled rubbish? Or is the whole intersected with fences, and here dark with fallows, there yellow with corn, while farmsteads terminate the lanes, and the dwellings and grounds of rich proprietors are seen at intervals, with each a hamlet resting against its boundaries? Is this the kind of scene, whether the great house be called mansion, or chateau, or villa, or schloss; whether the produce be corn, or grapes, or tea, or cotton? A person gifted with a precocity of science in the twelfth century might have prophesied what is now happening from the picture stretched out beneath him as he gazed from an eminence on the banks of the Don or the Calder. He might see with the bodily eye only

‘ Meadows trim with daisies pied,  
Shallow brooks and rivers wide,’

with clusters of houses in the far distance, and Robin Hood with his merry men lurking in the thickets of the forest or basking under the oaks; but with the prophetic eye of science he might discern the multitudes that were, in course of time, to be living in Sheffield or Huddersfield; the stimulus that would be given to enterprise, the thronging of merchants to this region, the physical sufferings, the moral pressure that must come, the awakening of intelligence and the arousing of ambition. In the real scene a cloud-shadow might be passing over a meadow, in the ideal a smoke-cloud would be resting upon a hundred thousand human beings. In the real scene a warbling lark might be springing from the grass, in the ideal a singer of a higher order\* might appear remonstrating with feudalism from amidst the roar of the furnace blast and the din of the anvil; and then, when his complaint of social oppression is done, starting forward to the end of all and singing the requiem of the world itself.

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“ Some preparation may thus be made by a glance over the face of the country. Much depends on whether it is flat or mountainous, pasture or arable land. It appears from fact, too, that much depends on minor circumstances, even on whether it is damp or dry. It is amusing to the traveller in Holland to observe how new points of morals spring up out of its swamps, as in the East from the dryness of the deserts. To injure

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\* The reference is to Ebenezer Elliott, the Sheffield “Corn Law Rhymer.”

the piles on which the city is built is at Amsterdam a capital offence, and no inhabitant could outgrow the shame of tampering with the vegetation by which the soil of the dykes is held together. \* \* \* \* \* In the East, where drought is the chief foe, it is a crime to defile or stop up a well, and the greatest of social glories is to have made water flow where all before was dry. In Holland a malignant enemy cuts the dyke as the last act of malice; in Arabia he fills up the wells."

To return, however, to history in its more special sense. Take Rome for an example. How will you understand the history of Rome—still more, of the Roman empire—without studying geography, even without continual reference to the facts of geography, as you read the historic record? Every incident in what may be termed the outer history of the Roman people bears direct reference to the conditions of geography—the site of the city at the foot of the Latin hills, with the more distant Apennine in the background, the sea a few miles off, the "yellow Tiber" rolling its turbid waters through the intervening plain, the peninsula of which the panorama that circles round the city itself forms a part, the sea into the very centre and heart of whose waters this peninsula advances, and to whose farthest shores it gives ready access. The Roman empire was the empire of the Mediterranean, and of the shores of that land-enclosed sea the waters of which have reflected so many of the great events that belong to the world's story. I need not quote Johnson's well-known remark on this subject—truer and more suggestive of valuable thought than are many of the sayings of the learned and law-giving doctor. The provinces of Rome lay in succession around the shores of the great sea, and careful study of the physical geography of the Mediterranean and its enclosing lands—all of them, with a single exception, mountain lands, and presenting every combination of mountain and plain, valley, river, lake, and forest—is absolutely necessary to the reader of Roman history, if he would comprehend aright the merely outward events of Roman story, yet more so if he would appreciate the full significance of much that lies beneath the external material of which too much of so-called history consists.

Take, as another illustration, that brilliant and attractive period of mediæval story which is identified with the Crusades. How, without geography, will you comprehend the history of the Crusades? How follow the soldiers of

the Cross in their long marches over the plains of the Lesser Asia ; through the defiles of the Taurus ; along the shores of Phœnicia, to the gates of the Holy City ? Who that has not been a diligent geographical as well as historical student can appreciate the difficulties by which the crusading armies were surrounded in those distant eastern lands—(not then, as now, accessible by “ Peninsular and Oriental ” steamers, with visits to the Holy Sepulchre, Cairo, Thebes, the cataracts of the Nile, or donkey rides to the Pyramids, facilitated by Mr. Cook’s excursion tickets)—who, I say, can, apart from geography, realize with any approach to truthfulness, the relative positions of the Christian and Moslem hosts, the wasting influences of the hot sun and burning air of Syria as the besiegers lay encamped around Antioch, Jerusalem, or Acre ; the groves and fruit-gardens of Damascus, the delicious draught of water cooled by the snows of Lebanon, the arid and often intensely-heated valley, the wilderness of naked rock, the welcome fountain found at rare intervals on the line of march, the olive grove, the bitter waters of “ that bituminous lake where Sodom stood,” or other features of the most interesting and sacred of lands ? Who, without knowledge of the physical aspects of the African shores, can image in its fulness the position of the captive queen of France, shut within the marsh-enclosed fortifications of Damietta ; or the touching and deeply-pathetic picture of the Christian king, drawing his last breath within his tent, as the soldiers of the Cross were encamped on the fever-stricken plains of Tunis, while the hot sun of the south filled the sky with its burning and lurid glare ?

Or turn for examples to modern history. Look at such a record as that of the Dutch republic. How can the inspiring story of its origin and early growth be understood without reference to the natural conditions of a region where man has to wage perpetual conflict with the waters of a neighbouring sea, where the very land itself consists in great measure of tracts gained from the ocean’s bed ? In what other land could the events that distinguish the early annals of the Netherlanders, as a distinct nation, have possibly occurred ? The very waters—agents of destruction



under ordinary circumstances—converted into the allies of heroic endurance, the preservers of patriotic virtue, the foes of tyrannic strength. Where else could inland cities derive aid from provision-laden fleets, equipped in readiness to sail over surrounding plains, so soon as the opened sluices should admit the distant waters and compel the break-up of beleaguering armies? Think—and observe the connexion between history and geography while doing so—of the citizens of Leyden making daily ascent of towers and housetops, watching in anxious expectancy every change of wind, and welcoming with delight the western breeze which should drive the waters inland and convert the plain around into an expanse of sea.

Or look, again, to such a record as that of the first Napoleon's career; one that (alas for mankind) is almost a continuous campaign, associated by turns with the Alps and the Pyrenees, the Lombard and the Belgic plains, the Nile, the Danube, the Rhine, the Elbe, and the Vistula, the sultry air of the Egyptian desert and the frozen plains of Moscow. Take, for more special instance, the story of the Russian invasion—of that terrible winter of 1812-13, with the horrors of the retreat from Moscow. How can the frightful sufferings which the invading army (and, in only a less degree, that of their opponents) experienced be understood without reference, not merely to the physical geography, in an external sense, of the Russian plain, but to the conditions by which the climate of Eastern Europe is characterized? The inquiring reader will not think it enough merely to follow the line of march; the most ordinary map of Europe would enable him to do *that*, with more or less of completeness as to detail. He will seek explanation of the causes which make the winter of the Russian plain so much severer in its intensity than that of Western Europe. Moscow is in the same latitude as Edinburgh; the Beresina flows between the same parallels as the Ouse, the Trent, or the Mersey; and the line of march followed by the retreating army, with the terrible and ruthless Cossacks on their flanks and in their rear, lay through frozen plains which are no farther to the north-

ward than those of Northern Germany and the Low Countries. Yet who does not remember the sad record to which I am referring—sad enough to make us pray that no imperial ruler may again, in the madness of selfish ambition, inflict such suffering upon mankind—how whole battalions lay down on the frozen soil, never to rise again, while the thick and frozen snow-flakes darkened the air, and the thermometer sank to 50°, and even more than 60°, below the freezing point? It is in the laws of physical geography that an explanation must be sought of the seeming anomaly involved in the fact that lines of equal temperature drawn across the map of Europe assume the direction of diagonals, and that the plains of European Russia exhibit alternately the burning heat of the tropics and the piercing severity of the Arctic zone.

It is not merely the grave narrative of the historian that receives illustration from geographical study. The stately measures of the poet—sometimes even his lighter thoughts and finer efforts of feeling and fancy—will obtain (and may even demand) illustration from reference to the facts of geography. Of course I do not here refer to those highest creations of poetic genius which are irrespective alike of time and place, and only find appreciative response in the hearts and souls of readers who linger in delight over the inspired page. It would add nothing to the charms of Prospero's magic art could we identify his island, "full of noises, sounds, and sweet airs," with any of those mountain tops which veritably rise above the waters of the Atlantic; as it detracts nothing from our admiration of the poet's genius to know that his references to locality sometimes run counter to the prosaic truths of geography. But take the case of Milton, whose majestic epic offers, in innumerable passages, a combination of historical and geographical lore. One of the reasons, indeed, why "*Paradise Lost*" is comparatively a sealed book to so many, is because few readers possess (or will make the effort to acquire) sufficient knowledge of history and geography to comprehend the poet's scenic imagery; his references, full of richest meaning to the well-stored mind, to localities that are

associated with the history, the tradition, the mythology of the ancient world. The great work of Milton, independently of its higher qualities, is a text-book of history and geography combined.

Or take the passages, descriptive of locality, which are so abundantly found in the writings of Scott, in his prose and poetry alike. No writer was ever more precise in his geography, more exact and truthful in his topographical detail. Many of the descriptions of locality in the Waverley Novels might be transferred, for exactitude of detail, to the pages of a guide-book, and are often, indeed, more correct (as well as infinitely more attractive in form) than those of which so-called guide-books consist. The poet recognizes—no one more fully—the infinite diversities which the study of external nature offers to view, and knows that no two scenes are exactly alike, however much to the superficial observer they may possess in common.

I offer another example of the aid to appreciative comprehension of the poet's meaning, derived from an author whose words I have already quoted, and taken from that one of his works in which you would probably least of all look for assistance of such a kind. Call to mind that touching passage of "In Memoriam" where the mourner tells how—

"The Danube to the Severn gave  
The darkened heart that beat no more ;  
They laid him by the pleasant shore,  
And in the hearing of the wave.  
There twice a day the Severn fills ;  
The salt sea-water passes by,  
And hushes half the babbling Wye,  
And makes a silence in the hills."

Does not the reader of these exquisite verses require to summon before his mental vision the picture of the romantic coast-line which belongs to the Bristol Channel on its Somersetshire side, the village church of Clevedon, the tide that holds its impetuous course up the adjacent estuary and its inflowing streams? Would it be possible for anyone who knows nothing of these localities to recognize the poet's meaning, to trace in its solemn fullness the connection between the closing scene of earthly life in the Austrian capital, the memorial tablet, and the hopes that culminate

in a future life, on the shore of the distant western sea? Again, every reader of Tennyson will recall passages in which the cities (such as "old Caerleon upon Usk") and other localities that belong to our south-western counties, to the neighbouring hills and plains of Cambria, to the rocks and forests of Brittany, are associated in the poet's verse with the incidents of Arthur's life and the personages of Arthur's half-mythic court.

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You will grant me, then, that the study of geography is necessary to the student of history; perhaps allow, besides, that it will sometimes render aid (slight, it may be, yet not to be wholly rejected) to the student of lighter and more imaginative literature. Is the converse of this proposition true? Is knowledge of history, of imaginative literature, useful or necessary to the geographical student? I answer, yes: at least if by geography we are to understand something more than dry facts, lists of names, places on the map, and so forth; the old staple of that school geography which was one of the bugbears of our youth, and the very recollection of which operates, in too many cases, to prevent recognition of the true place and meaning of geographical science. For of what use are mere *names*—whether of places or of things—what is there to make their retention in the mind worthy of effort, to give vital interest and meaning to the study of locality, if not their association with something possessing *human* interest? And does not history, the record of great events, of great men, of great movements and struggles, of national hopes and aspirations, supply this association? Compare any two regions, *one* of which has been the theatre of events that have their record in the page of the historian, while the other is devoid of such sources of interest—perhaps the home merely of barbarous or semi-barbarous nations; can anyone doubt which of the two will present the greater attraction to the student of geography? The aspects, climate, and productions of all lands, with the modes of life, habits, and usages of their inhabitants—civilized or savage—are no doubt

worthy objects of study, and will command the attention of every inquiring mind; but the interest which attaches to Kamschatka or Labrador is widely different from that belonging to Greece; as the shores of Phœnicia, the hills and valleys of Palestine, or the banks of the Nile, command a regard which differs, both in degree and kind, from that attaching to the Siberian plain, the Patagonian seacoast, the valley of the Zambesi, or even that of the Amazons. Is not the geography of Sicily more interesting, more deserving of detailed study, than that of Madagascar—of the lands that lie around the Mediterranean, in higher measure than is the case with the shores of Hudson Bay? And is not history largely concerned in the difference?

Reflect, for a moment, on the deep and varied interest which the actions of great men, the movements of nations, the struggles of ambition, the progress of commercial enterprise, the growth of civilization, have conferred, and are still conferring, upon particular portions of the earth. Look at any great *historic* region—say, for instance, the Alpine lands. Even in their merely physical aspect the Alps are no doubt possessed of commanding interest; their geology, climate, botany, their glaciers, and other features, deserve and repay the fullest inquiry. But they are, besides, a great historic region; they have formed, and still form, the boundary between nations—in ancient times, the limit between civilization and barbarism, between the dweller in cities, protected by the majesty of the Roman name, and the Teuton, who found his safeguard in his sheltering forests: armies, under the command at one time of a Marius, at another of a Hannibal, or, in a later age, of a Napoleon, have traversed their defiles; campaigns have been carried on within their enclosed valleys, even upon their dizzy heights; while the Lombard plain which lies at their base has been over and over again the battle-field of hostile legions. The names of its cities, its villages, its torrents—Pavia, Milan, Verona, Mantua, Lodi, Arcola, Marengo, Montebello, the Adige, the Bormida—are stamped indelibly on the pages of the world's story. Is not the geography of such a region felt to be increasingly worthy of study as such

facts are known? Will not the apprehension of even the dullest of learners be quickened, his enthusiasm awakened, by reference to them?

Or refer, for another illustration, to one of the great historic rivers of Europe—the Rhine or the Danube. The former is pre-eminently entitled to the epithet of historic, and the regions through which it has its course, from its cradle in the snowy Alpine land to its final exit in the low plains that border the German Ocean, share in the distinction. Strasbourg, Worms, Speyer, Mentz, Frankfurt, Cologne, Utrecht, Haarlem, Leyden, Zutphen—what names are these? Do not the associations they awaken give added interest to the magnificent and abounding stream which is so dear to the German heart, and which, in the castled crags that border its valley, and the legendary lore with which its rocks and precipices, its eddying pools and shallows, are linked, belongs throughout its course to the study of nations? Have not the lands that are within the Rhine basin been the dominion of Charlemagne—the fields of contest between the armies of France and Germany—witness of the military triumphs of a Turenne, a Condé, a Napoleon? Do they not include localities that have been dignified by the moral courage of a Luther, scenes that are consecrated by the poetic genius of a Schiller and a Goethe? Who will not, under intelligent guidance, study the features of such a region with delighted interest? Who will not readily allow that the historic associations which crowd around such names as the Alps and the Rhine impart to them an interest which is wanting (at least to European apprehension) in the case of such mountain ranges as the Yablonoï, the Yung-ling, the Thian-shan, such rivers as the Choo-kiang, the Sang-koi, or the Hwang-ho? “Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.”

But we need not travel so far as Alp-land or Rhine-land in search of historic plains and rivers. Is not our own “royal-towered” Thames in every sense an historic stream? Its old city fortress, with the records of a thousand years

attaching to its towers and their enclosed dwelling-places, its regal hall, its venerable cloistered Abbey, its Runnymede, its Windsor, proud abode of Plantagenets and Tudors, of kings and queens of Stuart and Brunswick lines—its Oxford, and a hundred other localities that are beside its stream—these belong to the pages of history as well as geography. Are there not, within the seas that encircle our island-home, a thousand localities, scenes of contest in the council-chamber or the field of battle, birthplace or residence of men whose names are enshrined in story, linked in thought with the imagery of the poet, the triumphs of literature and art? Can the description of such a land, save in the hand of the dullest teacher, be otherwise than interesting? The geography, the topography, of England, allied with its history, may be made attractive as a fairy tale.

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I forbear, however, to adduce farther instances in illustration of a connection so obvious as that between history and geography, and fear that I may already have wearied you with somewhat lengthened comment on the particular aspects of the subject which present themselves to my own mind. I would, in conclusion, only add a remark upon the frequent and familiar opportunities which offer themselves to those who are desirous of extending their knowledge of geography: in the course of their reading, from that of a kind such as the daily journals supply, to the higher and completer sources of information which the student, studying with a definite purpose, will prefer: in the familiar intercourse with those who have visited other lands, for which opportunities are in the present day of such frequent occurrence: in much of the business of daily life, at least in those cases (and they are frequent) which involve interchange between the productions of our own country and distant regions, with the attendant exchange of correspondence: and in the case of those holiday rambles which are a marked and gratifying feature of the social life of the age. It is not, indeed, within the power of all (or even the majority

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